

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

December 1998

Arlington County faces down Y2K

Much like a hurricane, the Y2K problem looms ever larger as the 20th century draws to a close. And like the strong winds and heavy rains that precede a hurricane, it's already affecting both public-and private-sector organizations.

Arlington County's Project Management Office, which deals with information systems technology, has been working for the past two years to prepare its local government agencies for the Year 2000 problem. Under the auspices of the office, a number of planning teams, representing different functional areas of the local government, are identifying potential Y2K problems and developing solutions for them.

The county manager has tasked each agency to be Y2K compliant and to have contingency plans prepared by March of next year. "We're basically looking at it like any potential disaster," said Deputy Emergency Services Coordinator Kevin Fannin, who leads the public safety emergency planning team for the Y2K problem. "We know that January 1, 2000, is coming — we just don't know what impact it will have."

The team, which includes the fire and police departments and public affairs, started work this past summer identifying the potential crises related to life/safety issues. Working with the county's emergency management system already in place, Fannin subdivided responsibilities among the routing and traffic, sheltering, resources, employee support, communications, and recovery task forces.

Periodic brainstorming sessions between the planning team and the task forces ensure that good ideas are shared.

"It potentially could be regional or even national," said Fannin about the effects of the Year 2000 problem. "We're planning as if assistance may not come from other jurisdictions because they may be busy dealing with their own problems."

Although the county's EOP includes procedures for requesting help

civil disturbances.

Fannin pointed out that although the county's systems may be Y2K-compliant, there is no way of knowing if the organizations and companies with which the county interacts will be compliant as well. In addition, vendors are reluctant to offer absolute assurances their products are Y2K compliant because of liability and litigation issues.

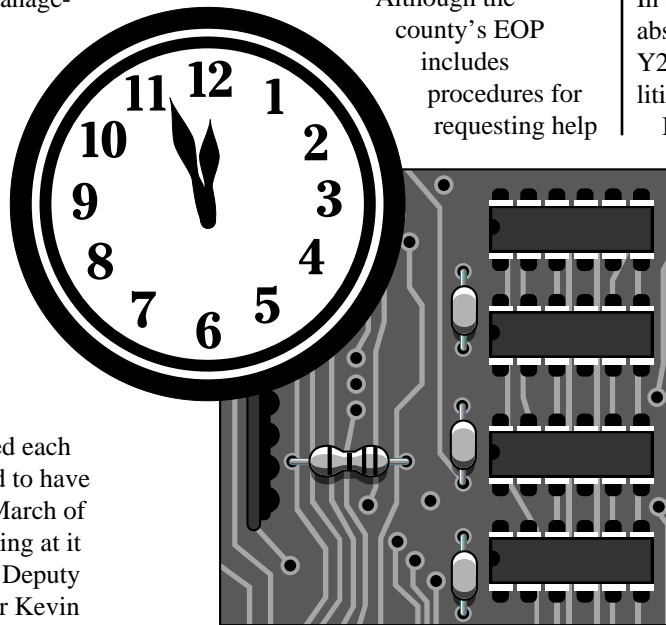
In Fannin's perspective, the biggest

headaches are associated with systems containing embedded chips. "It's a real problem because there's so many of them out there," he said. "It's a domino effect — there's so many external sources that could impact on services and vendors. We can't really control all of that."

An important aspect of the team's Y2K planning includes public education. Through a systematic campaign, team members seek to inform Arlington's residents of potential problems and how best to prepare

themselves. In fact, Fannin described this effort as a vital component to planning efforts that will cumulate in a Y2K drill this spring. "The main thing is, we want to do it in a way that won't cause panic," said Fannin. "We want to get people to

(Continued on page 2)



from neighboring jurisdictions, the team's approach is based on the premise that, in the first 24-48 hours, the county may have to rely completely on its own resources.

"We're looking at everything we need to put in place beforehand," said Fannin. "For example, food and water in place for two days, backup heat sources, etc."

The team is preparing for such occurrences as power outages and failures in the county's E911 system. Other items include working with the local hospitals to make sure they are prepared to face Y2K problems and can continue to function; that shelters stay open in the event there is no power for light and heat; and law enforcement preparation for possible

Inside

- ☐ **Reservist Emergency Managers? - p. 2**
- ☐ **Prompt response integral to potential terrorist incidents - p. 3**
- ☐ **VEMA creates Addison E. Slayton Jr. Scholarship - p. 3**

James City County adds citizen involvement to its emergency response mix

Helping communities prepare for and recover from disasters is one of the cornerstones of emergency management. The idea that communities can actively participate in the response process emphasizes fresh ways of thinking about response activities.

Emergency management in James City County is developing a program that inventively uses existing government resources and community involvement to improve communication between emergency services and citizens during and after a disaster. Using the networking framework set in place by the county's Office of Neighborhood Connections, volunteer Neighborhood Emergency Coordinators are being recruited who will serve as liaisons between their neighborhoods and the county's EOC.

"The purpose is to facilitate involvement," said Emergency Services Coordinator Richard Miller. "We want to

establish a connection with our 'connected' neighborhoods as a way for us to send information down (in a disaster) and to get information back from the community. We need to communicate — we had a need and they (the office) had the ability to help us meet this need."

Bob Ryalls, EMS District Chief with the county fire department, brainstormed the idea after the county's recent LEMOC exercise. "If we have a network of voluntary 'emergency managers' in the neighborhoods, then they can call us with problems. That would, in turn, help us better allocate our resources in the event of a disaster," he said.

The starting point was an August introductory meeting to which neighborhood association leaders were invited. They received a tour of the EOC, an introduction to the program and an explanation of what their roles would be as Neighborhood Emergency

Coordinators. "In the event of a disaster, we pointed out to them they wouldn't have a normal rapid response like with a fire," said Ryalls. "We helped them understand that we may not be able to provide for them right away."

Future plans involve developing structured training programs for the volunteers based on their needs, putting together a resources packet using FEMA preparedness materials and other information and building a "telephone tree" similar to military recall telephone trees. Ryalls explained the telephone tree would allow a volunteer emergency coordinator in the county EOC to reach 20-30 families with one call. "We can't be there for everybody," said Ryalls. "This program will help us get a better handle on the 'big picture' during a disaster."

For information, call Bob Ryalls at 757/220-0626, or Deputy Emergency Services Coordinator Wilton Bobo at 757/566-4315.

Arlington County

(Continued from page 1)

help themselves. It's going to lessen the load on us if Y2K does turn out to be of significant impact."

In relation to the county's efforts, Fannin proposed a "wish list" of Y2K resources. "We need to get more information from other jurisdictions to see what they're doing," he said. "If a jurisdiction has failures, it may rely on our resources, which will impact us. From FEMA — as far as what their role is going to be — we're not sure exactly what type of support we'd have in the event of a major regional disaster."

Fannin observed about the planning process, "The contingency planning, risk assessment — this takes a considerable amount of time and effort. The earlier you can start planning, the better."

For information, call Kevin Fannin at 703/228-4652.

Emergency preparedness for tornadoes gets big boost

Tornadoes can strike with little or no warning, often leaving death and destruction in their wake. But next year, you have an invaluable opportunity to motivate the schools and day care facilities in your area to get prepared.

The second annual statewide tornado drill will take place on March 9, 1999, which will be declared Tornado Preparedness Day by Governor Gilmore. On that date at 10 a.m., National Weather Service offices in the three regions across the state will be activating the NOAA Weather Radio with a test tornado warning. This will allow partici-

pating schools and day care centers, as well as businesses, to practice their emergency procedures.

Start your tornado preparedness efforts now by contacting your local school administrators. Make sure they each have a NOAA Weather Radio, and if they don't, help them acquire one. Put your planning expertise to good use and assist

them with creating effective school tornado plans. Use your local media to alert the community about this great opportunity to test their preparedness. Get the

public and private schools in your area to participate in this potentially lifesaving drill and make the day a success for emergency preparedness.

For information, call Janet Clements at 804/897-6510, e-mail jclements.des@state.va.us.



HAZ MAT



Prompt notification critical in potential terrorist incident

by Brett Burdick, VDES Terrorism Program Manager

VDES has been delivering terrorism training to Virginia's first responders for the last two years. In that time, approximately 2,500 firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMS providers, public works professionals, and emergency managers have completed the eight-hour awareness-level course, *Public Safety Response to Terrorism*. An additional several hundred incident commanders and emergency managers have completed the more advanced two-day course, *Public Safety Response to Terrorism - Management Considerations*. This training program has set the stage for a safe, effective, and efficient response to a terrorist incident in Virginia. We encourage every jurisdiction and department to send their people to these courses.

In the past year or so in this country, there has been a noticeable rise in the occurrence of terrorist and terrorist-like incidents that use weapons of mass destruction (WMD). From bombings to threats involving biological toxins and disease-producing organisms, most of these incidents fortunately turned out to be hoaxes.

Virginia has experienced several such incidents over the past months. What do you do when you get the call that your community is experiencing an

incident involving WMD?

Most importantly, treat any threat of the use of WMD as the "real deal" until competent authorities determine that it is a hoax. It is critical we respond to WMD incidents in a professional manner to protect public safety. At a minimum, this means isolating the hazard and denying entry to the area of potential impact. Protecting public safety also means we must not overreact to the situation. There are many scenarios involving WMD, including one in which emergency decontamination is not required to protect the public and first responders. It's critical you get good information as quickly as possible to determine the proper course of action. This is where VDES can assist.

Ultimately, all WMD incidents are hazmat incidents. VDES Hazardous Materials Officers have the training and resources to assist you in taking the appropriate action. They can access all needed information from other state agencies and from the federal government. But none of this can happen if you don't call us. As with all hazmat incidents, we strongly encourage you to call the state EOC at the first hint there may be a WMD incident in your community. We encourage all jurisdictions to make this notification part of their Emergency Operations Plan and Standard Operating

Procedures. This single telephone call is "one-stop shopping" for any outside assistance you will need to resolve the incident.

Your primary point of contact for assistance in a WMD incident should be the Virginia EOC. An early call to

VDES will begin the process of turning a chaotic terrorist incident into a successful response.

For more information about the VDES terrorism courses, please contact the Technological Hazards Division at 804/897-6570.

If you suspect a terrorist incident in your jurisdiction that may involve Weapons of Mass Destruction, immediately call the Virginia Emergency Operations Center at 804/674-2400 or call the toll-free number at 1-800-468-8892.

VEMA scholarship created to encourage professionalism

Emergency managers and others who work in the field can get some help in funding their college education, thanks to the Virginia Emergency Management Association's newly created scholarship fund. The Addison E. Slayton Jr. Scholarship, created this year, was named after the recently retired VDES state coordinator in acknowledgment of his contributions to emergency services in Virginia.

"We want to enhance the professionalism of emergency management by helping people continue their education," said Chesterfield's Emergency Services Coordinator and scholarship committee chairman, Lynda Furr Price. "The scholarship is for anyone with a serious interest in emergency management who wants to earn a degree."

The fund is meant to assist those in the field to achieve college degrees, one of the requirements of the CEM program. Interested candidates must complete the application included with this issue of *Update*. Qualifying criteria are described on the form.

A review board, made up of representatives from the VEMA executive board, VEMA general membership and VDES, will select the most qualified candidate to receive the scholarship. The recipient will be recognized at the Virginia Emergency Management Conference on Severe Weather that will be held in Williamsburg this March.

To be considered, please fill out the enclosed form and return by the deadline to the address indicated. For more information, call Lynda Furr Price at 804/748-1236.

Training Calendar

Emergency Management Coordinator's Briefing

December 9-10
Richmond

Exercise Design

January 6-7
Richmond

Basic Public Information Officer Course

January 6-8
Williamsburg

Effective Communication

January 12-14
Richmond

ICS/EOC Interface

January 20-21
Richmond

Hazardous Weather and Flood Preparedness

January 26-28
Charlottesville

Emergency Planning Workshop

February 9-11
Richmond
For information, call the VDES Training Office at 804/897-6557

Reservist Training

VEOC Tabletop Exercise I

December 8
February 4
March 4
Richmond

EIS Sustainment Training

November 18
February 4
Richmond

Information and Planning Branch Workshop

December 8
Richmond

Rapid Assessment Workbook Overview

January 14
Richmond
For information, call Lin Saylor at 804/897-6552

Technological Hazards Chemistry of Hazardous Materials (weekend course)

January 9-10, 23-24
February 6-7, 20-21, 27-28
Location to be announced

Hazardous Materials Technician

April 5-16
Location to be announced

Advanced Hazmat Control

May 10-14
Location to be announced
For information, call Ron Hargrave at 804/897-6573

Search and Rescue GSAR Institute

Part I: January 22-24
Part II: February 19-21
Blue Ridge

SAR Council

January 30
Richmond
For information, call Winnie Pennington at 804/674-2422

Conferences

State Fire Chiefs Association Conference

February 26-28
Virginia Beach
Call 757/491-2800 for information

Virginia Emergency Management Conference

March 17-19
Williamsburg
Call 757/491-2800 for information

Planning for animals

Disaster planning for animals — where do you start? You might begin by checking out two new independent study courses FEMA is offering. The first deals with how disasters affect people and their animals and the second focuses on incorporating animals into community disaster planning.

If you need to work planning for animals into your local emergency operations plan, you may want to look into these classes. As with all of FEMA's Independent Study courses, you must enroll to receive a certificate of completion, but there are no prerequisites or enrollment fees.

Enroll online or download course materials from the FEMA Web site at www.fema.gov/EMI/Ishome.htm. For more information or to enroll, write EMI, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Md., 21727 and ask about course numbers IS-010 and IS-011.

"Good Ideas" book

To better assist disaster educators, FEMA is expanding its *Good Ideas Book* to include more information and case studies on the most effective approaches in the field. It's not too late to contribute your great program to the upcoming issue.

Of particular interest are programs that cover how to organize communities, neighborhoods, the workplace, schools and school districts; how to build effective partnerships; how to efficiently use your financial resources; and how to reach disabled people, children and other special audiences.

Share your good ideas so that others can benefit. To submit your innovative approaches in disaster education, send a short summary to Ralph Swisher, CFP Program Manager, FEMA, 500 C Street, S.W., Washington, D.C., 20472, call 202/646-3561 or e-mail Ralph.Swisher@fema.gov



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UPDATE is a monthly publication of the Virginia Department of Emergency Services. For permission to reprint articles in your publication or on the Internet, please call 804/897-6510.

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